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Inform Asia: USAID's Health Research program

Associate Award 1: Annual Report for Lao People's Democratic Republic

September 1–September 30, 2016

Cooperative Agreement Number: AID-486-LA-15-00001

Activity Start Date and End Date: September 1, 2015 to March, 2017

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CHAS	Center for HIV/AIDS and STIs (Lao PDR)
COP	Chief of Party
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PDR	(Lao) People's Democratic Republic
Q	quarter
RIHES	Research Institute for Health Sciences
S&D	stigma and discrimination
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TA	technical assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Program Overview/Summary

Program Name:	Inform Asia: USAID's Health Research Program Associate Award 1
Activity Start Date and End Date:	September 1, 2015–March 31, 2017
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	RTI International
[Contract/Agreement] Number:	AID-486-LA-15-00001
Geographic Coverage (cities and or countries):	Regional (focus: Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic)
Reporting Period:	September 1, 2015–September 30, 2016

1.1 Program Description/Introduction

This is the annual report (September 1, 2015–September 30, 2016) for activities covered under Inform Asia's Associate Award 1 in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR).

During this fiscal year, Inform Asia's program descriptions were revised and approved by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on June 1, 2016. Following the approval of the revised program description, the revised work plan was submitted on June 30, 2016 and received approval on July 8, 2016.

Associate Award 1 program goal: Associate Award 1 contributes to Inform Asia's overarching program goal of "Improved health outcomes as a result of evidence-based health research results that are used to inform national health policy and programming" by providing resources to conduct human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-related research and capacity-building activities in Thailand and Lao PDR. The objective of Associate Award 1 is as follows:

Objective 1: Conducting scientific and operational research with regard to key populations, innovation design, health system strengthening, and the promotion of implementation science in Thailand and Lao PDR.

This report summarizes Associate Award 1 work conducted in Lao PDR during the reporting period for approved activities (**Exhibit 1**).¹

Exhibit 1: Summary of Associate Award 1 activities for Lao PDR

No.	Activity Title	Desired policy or programmatic outcomes	Lead Partner
1.3 ²	Adaptation and implementation of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Center for HIV, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	CHAS with technical assistance (TA)

¹ Note that a separate report is submitted covering Associate Award 1 activities for Thailand.

² The number is in reference to the activity number included in the revised work plan submitted and approved on July 8, 2016.

No.	Activity Title	Desired policy or programmatic outcomes	Lead Partner
	stigma and discrimination (S&D) assessment tool in Lao PDR (referred to as the Measuring HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Health Care Settings study in this report).	<p>(AIDS) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (CHAS) has the capacity to continuously monitor S&D in health care settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHAS demonstrates leadership in continuing to support S&D activities through ongoing resource mobilization for activities. • Strengthened technical collaboration between the Lao PDR and Thai governments to mitigate S&D in health care settings. 	supported by and from the Research Institute for Health Sciences (RIHES) and RTI.

1.2 Summary of Results to Date

In this section, we present a summary of the results to date during the reporting period of September 1, 2015–September 30, 2016 (**Exhibit 2**).

Exhibit 2. Summary of the Results to Date for Year 1

Activity	Year 1 Results
1.3 Adaptation and implementation of the S&D assessment tool in Lao PDR (referred to as the Measuring HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Health Care Settings study in this report)	<p>In September 2015, RTI and RIHES attended the Lao HIV steering group committee meeting in Vientiane, Lao PDR, where an overview of the impact of S&D on HIV and the proposed adaptation activity were discussed. The team also met with the CHAS Director to share the process and experience from Thailand. This resulted in the development of an implementation plan.</p> <p>Following the above visit in quarter (Q)1, the RIHES consultants conducted an S&D-reduction workshop on January 6–8, 2016, to finalize the tool-adaptation process.</p> <p>In Q3, the S&D assessment tool was adapted, field tested, and translated into Laotian.</p> <p>Together with CHAS, RIHES conducted a training on data collection and data management on April 4–7, 2016. Data collection commenced following the training and lasted from April until May. Ongoing TA was provided by RIHES to ensure the quality of the data collection and to address any issues that arose during the fieldwork.</p> <p>In July (Q4), CHAS organized preliminary data analysis and conducted an interpretation meeting with key stakeholders.</p> <p>The dissemination meeting was initially scheduled to be organized in late August but had to be postponed to October 2016.</p>

2. Activity Implementation Progress

2.1 Progress Narrative

Below is a summary of the status of work supported under this Associate Award.

Activity 1.3: Adaptation and implementation of the S&D assessment tool in Lao PDR

In September 2015, an initial consultation meeting was hosted to present the scope of work for the Measuring HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Health Care Settings study. This was followed by the development of a work plan for study implementation covering the period October–December 2015.

In Q2, two RIHES consultants (Dr. Suwat Chariyalertsak, Director, and Dr. Kriengkrai Srithanaviboonchai, Head of the Research Center for AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections) provided TA to CHAS to adapt the S&D tools and survey methodologies for use in Lao PDR. The RIHES consultants facilitated a workshop on January 6–8, 2016 with 25 participants from CHAS, Mahosot Hospital, and Setthathirath Hospital; counselors from Mahosot Hospital; drop-in-center staff from Vientiane Capital; and Provincial Committee for the Control of AIDS staff from Vientiane. A first draft of the revised tool was a key outcome of this workshop.

In Q3, RIHES continued to provide TA to CHAS to finalize the tool. Once finalized, the tool was translated into Laotian. From April 4–7, 2016, CHAS and RIHES jointly facilitated a workshop in Vientiane on data collection and data management for the study. The workshop participants were trained on how to use different tools to collect data efficiently and how to manage the collected data using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) software, an online solution for designing research databases. This training session was facilitated by the other two consultants from RIHES: Jarun Chueayen, a programmer, and Suthathip Wongsrithep, a statistician. A total of 27 participants—6 staff from Mahosot Hospital, 7 staff from Savannaket Hospital, 6 staff from Setthathirath Hospital, and 8 staff from Champasak Hospital—attended the training. Following the training, the field teams collected data between May–June, 2016. Dr. Suwat and Dr. Kriengkrai made field trips to supervise data collection at all four study sites during the initial stage of data collection to assure quality and address any issues faced by the field teams.

On July 11–13, RIHES led a training to analyze data and build capacity on how to interpret the survey results. A total of 31 participants took part, including 1 from Vientiane's Provincial Committee for the Control of AIDS, 15 from CHAS, 5 from Champasak Hospital, 5 from Savannaket Hospital, 2 from Mahosot Hospital, and 3 from Setthathirath Hospital.

In August and September 2016, RIHES and CHAS prepared for a dissemination meeting at which the findings from the surveys will be presented to key stakeholders to inform the S&D situation in health care settings in Lao PDR and plan to develop a national strategy and action plan to reduce S&D in health care settings. The meeting had originally been planned for late August/early September 2016 but was rescheduled for October 12–14, 2016.

2.2 Program Achievements

S&D tool developed for use in Lao PDR: With leadership from CHAS and TA from RIHES, the global S&D tool was adapted for use in Lao PDR. This tool will enable CHAS to gather data to inform interventions to address HIV-related S&D now and in the future. This global tool has also been adapted widely in the Caribbean, with data having already been collected in five countries and data collection about to start in Jamaica. These data have served as a catalyst for stigma-reduction programming in health facilities in these countries. In addition, the tool has been adapted for use in a sub-study in a large randomized control study of community antiretroviral therapy (Population Effects of Antiretroviral Therapy to Reduce HIV Transmission [POPART]) funded by the National Institutes of Health in Zambia and South Africa. Furthermore,

it is now being adapted for use in the United States in multiple states. This year, it will also be adapted for use in two sub-Saharan African countries.

Capacity building: RIHES provided staff from CHAS and participating hospitals with training and TA in S&D tool application, data collection and management, survey result interpretation, and report development.

South-south collaboration: One outcome of this collaboration and Inform Asia's support has been that other countries have expressed a desire to conduct similar activities. In fact, in late September 2016, the United Nations Joint Programme on AIDS and Vietnam AIDS Control Center under the Vietnam Ministry of Health expressed interest in conducting a similar S&D assessment in Vietnam. Inform Asia and RTI are excited that this work is being recognized and that its partners, especially RIHES, are becoming recognized as experts in this area. Because this work represents many years of investment on the part of both USAID and RTI and, in particular, investment in developing the capacity of RIHES to conduct S&D surveys, the fact that other ministries of health in the region are recognizing RIHES' capacity and reaching out to request south-south collaboration represents a success.

Inform Asia is currently reviewing the Associate Award 1 budget to determine whether there is scope to fund RIHES conducting a Training-of-Trainers for CHAS as the first sustainable step to conduct additional S&D reducing interventions in health care settings after Inform Asia's financial support. This activity is being undertaken as a result of a request from CHAS. The proposal is expected to be submitted to USAID in early Q1 of Year 2.

2.3 Implementation Status

Exhibit 3 lists the activities proposed in the work plan and their progress to date.

Exhibit 3: Gantt Chart of Activity Status by the End of Year 1

	Lead	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Status
Adaptation and Implementation of the S&D Assessment Tool in Lao PDR						
Introductory visit to Lao PDR for S&D awareness raising	RIHES/CHAS	X				Achieved
Adaptation meeting			X			Achieved
Implementation meeting				X		Achieved
Short-term working group formed by CHAS to review the tool adaptation		X				Achieved
Collect data from health facilities in three provinces (Vientiane, Savannakhet, and Champasak), as specified in the research protocol, using the S&D survey				X		Achieved
Analysis of data: Draft analysis report for HIV S&D survey in health care settings					X	August–November 2016

	Lead	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Status
Dissemination of preliminary results in CHAS-hosted workshop on HIV S&D in health care settings						October 2016
Final report completed						December 2017

2.4 Implementation Challenges

The revision of the program description and work plan did not significantly delay implementation but did require additional efforts in administration because the program needed to seek approvals to continue activities and to directly support activities for them to continue.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Update

Following USAID's approval of the revised program descriptions on June 1, 2016, a revised work plan was submitted on June 30, 2016. The indicators that were originally proposed for the Leader with Associates Award are no longer applicable because of the change in the program direction. At the time this report was being prepared, the M&E plan was being revised per USAID's comments. This plan will be submitted to USAID at the end of October 2016.

Exhibit 4 lists the indicators proposed in the first submission of the revised M&E plan. Some indicators will be subject to change once the revised M&E plan is commented on by USAID.

Exhibit 4: M&E Indicators

Indicator	Description and Unit of Measurement	Data Source	Reporting Frequency	Baseline	Target	Progress
National CHAS-hosted dissemination workshop held	<p>Use: Tracks the completion of milestones</p> <p>Description: This indicator tracks the completion of the national CHAS-hosted workshop on HIV S&D in health care settings.</p>	Activity-tracking table	Annually	N/A	1	<p>0%</p> <p>Planned for October 12–14, 2016</p>
Number of deliverables produced for the adaptation of S&D measurement tool	<p>Use: Tracks deliverables produced by the activity</p> <p>Description: This indicator provides the total number of deliverables produced for the adaption of the S&D measurement tool, including surveys, analysis outputs, tools for offsite S&D monitoring, and reporting. No disaggregation needed.</p> <p>Unit: Absolute number of deliverables</p>	Activity-tracking table	Quarterly	N/A	4	<p>50%</p> <p>Two deliverables: adapted tools and survey findings</p> <p>The survey findings were submitted in October 2016.</p>
Number of people trained in S&D measurement and analysis	<p>Use: Tracks the number of people trained</p> <p>Description: This indicator provides the total number of people trained in S&D measurement and analysis. Only people who satisfactorily complete training should be counted in this indicator. Training topics include the S&D measurement method, use of the tool for measurement, and analysis of data collected with the S&D tool.</p> <p>Unit: Absolute number of people</p>	Activity-tracking table and training records	Quarterly	N/A	19	<p>100%</p> <p>A total of 54 people trained in Lao PDR.</p>

3. Management and Administrative Issues

During Q3, Inform Asia Associate Award 2, along with the Leader with Associates Award and Associate Award 1, underwent significant structural change. Most notably, in April 2016, the Chief of Party (COP) resigned, and RTI commenced recruitment for a new COP with malaria expertise to better address the program needs. By the end of Q3, a new COP candidate, Dr. Darin Kongkasuriyachai, was submitted to and approved by USAID. Unfortunately, Dr. Kongkasuriyachai is unable to commence work until December 1, 2016, because of her pre-existing work commitments.

In the interim, with USAID's consent, RTI has had two interim acting COPs. Currently, Ms. Felicity Young, RTI Senior Director, Health Policy, is the acting COP until Dr. Kongkasuriyachai commences.

4. Planned Activities for the Next Reporting Period, including Upcoming Events and Travel

The dissemination meeting of findings is planned for October 12–14, 2016. RIHES and CHAS will work together to develop a final report and submit it by the end of December 2016. RTI, together with Thailand's Bureau of AIDS, Tuberculosis and STIs; Thailand's National AIDS Management Center; and RIHES are developing a concept note to propose a regional meeting to share findings in Thailand and Laos and lessons learned. This concept note will be submitted to USAID by early Q1 of Year 2.

Exhibit 5 provides a list of planned travel (upon USAID approval) for Associate Award 1 in Q1 of Year 2.

Exhibit 5: Proposed International Travel for Associate Award 1 in Q1 of Year 2

Traveler	Link to activities and description	Origin	Destination	Trips/days
Dr. Suwat Chariyalertsak (RIHES) Dr. Kriengkrai Sritanaviboonchai (RIHES)	To provide TA to CHAS for the S&D activities	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Vientiane, Lao PDR	Three days October 12–14
Ms. Krittaporn Termvanich (HIV Program Coordinator)	To attend the dissemination meeting on findings and discuss the next steps	Bangkok, Thailand	Vientiane, Lao PDR	Three days October 12–14
Ms. Suthisa Panameta (Finance Manager)	To provide TA to CHAS for the S&D activities	Bangkok, Thailand	Vientiane, Lao PDR	Three days October 12–14